

Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 6, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Peter Jessop, Chair, in the Community Room of the Police Station.

Committee Members in Attendance: Marilyn Blaustein, Paris Boice, Lynda Faye, Michael Jacques, Peter Jessop, , Mary Streeter

Committee Members Absent: Sandra Anderson, Ellen Kosmer, Stan Ziomek

Staff/Others in Attendance: Sonia Aldrich, Dave Ziomek, Matt Cornell

Agenda items to be discussed:

- Review Discuss and Vote Proposals for:
 - Ricci Property Acquisition
 - North Common Proposal
 - Plum Brook Conservation Area Addition
- Set schedule for future meetings and distribution of Proposal letter
- Set agenda for next meeting
- Approve any minutes
- Topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours before the meeting.

DISCUSSION:

Everyone introduced themselves. Lynda said she would like to share her position as representative from the Historical Commission with Matt Cornell. Peter advised that only Lynda would voting as the rep, but that Matt was welcome to attend any of the meetings to convey information to the Historical Commission in Lynda's absence.

FINANCIAL STATUS:

Peter reviewed our financial condition. Last spring we placed \$200,000 in reserves that we intended to have available in case any Open Space projects come forward for funding in the fall. In addition we have an estimated year-end balance of \$76,794.26 that includes \$17,714.26 in returned appropriations. The total we can recommend this fall is \$276,794.26. Returned funds include money from projects that were approved at a previous Town Meeting that didn't move forward and leftover balances from completed projects. He estimated that we would have \$488,000 (approximately \$380,000 from local taxes and \$108,000 from State Match) to recommend projects for Annual 2013 Town Meeting plus any remaining balance from this fall's \$276,794.26. Sonia reminded that we could also consider the option to borrow for a project.

Mike asked about any deadlines we may have soon for recommendations. The list of warrant articles is due September 24 and the article language is due October 9, 2012. Town Meeting begins November 19, 2012. Dave Ziomek explained that last spring a number of projects weren't quite ready for Town Meeting, which is why we had reserved funds. He introduced us to three current proposals. Staff has applied for three separate grants:

- a PARC Grant (Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities) for the North Common Project (70% grant match/30% CPA funds),
- a LAND Grant (Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity) for the Ricci Project (70% grant match /30% CPA funds), and
- a Partnership Grant with Kestrel Trust for the Brunelle Project (50% grant match /50% CPA funds).

We should know whether we got each of the grants before Fall Special Town Meeting and would likely withdraw any project for which we do not receive grant funds.

The **North Common Project** is an Open Space and Historic Preservation project, which is being proposed as a design/build project suggested by Mr. Musante. The first year an outside design outfit would be hired for \$50,000 to engage participants such as the Historical Commission, LSSE, BID, businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and the community at large to share ideas for the design which would be completed by June 2013. The Common would be built in the second year. The North Common is used in an intense way and the walkways are poorly designed for the current amount of foot traffic. The DPW made a cost estimate of approximately \$500,000 for lighting, bituminous walkways, benches, granite curbs, tree wells, etc. The trees that are there would be protected and new trees would also be planted. Erosion, soil compaction, storm water run-off, and narrow sidewalks are current problems. Marilyn asked about fundraising, the BID donation, and what the maximum cost might be. Dave said these donations might be on top of the CPA and grant funds, for items such as tables or interpretive materials. The map in the packet is not the final design; it was created because the grant application required a schematic. It is not definite that the State would fully fund the grant, so the project may need to be scaled back. Paris asked about maintenance costs. Dave does not anticipate maintenance costs beyond mowing and tree care. The work would be contracted out as required by the State. Dave said the grant was submitted in July and is contingent on Town Meeting approval. We should know before Town Meeting whether we got the grant. Town Meeting could approve for a lesser amount. All of the money must be encumbered in the first year. Peter stressed that we would like to know the sequence of State deadlines as we might want to consider this project in the Spring. Dave said he thinks the LSSE, as our designated Parks Commission, would hold the restriction on the North Common.

The **Ricci Property Acquisition Project** consists of approximately 20 acres on the south side of Bay Road along the Holyoke Range, but does not include the parcel where the farmhouse is located. This land is a high priority and would be purchased "in fee". About half of it is farmland that could be leased to farmers. There would be a small parking lot. This land has spectacular views.

The proposal includes a one-time fee to a third party organization to hold a conservation restriction in perpetuity as required by the CPA law. The Kestrel Trust is willing to hold the restriction for a fee of \$7,500. The Town cannot own the land and hold the restriction. Dave expects to bring a package article in the spring for restrictions for conservation lands previously purchased with CPA funds. This does not apply to APR parcels since the owner is private; the Town is the co-holder with the State of APR restrictions. Peter would like to know what the Conservation Commission recommends concerning this project, and also what the Historical Commission recommends on the North Common Project.

Marilyn wondered what the reduction in tax revenue would be. Mike asked about back taxes (5 years) for land taken out of the 61A program and potential buildout issues. Dave explained that taxes do not need to be paid if the land is preserved and that in 2003 the State had a buildout analysis done that estimated Amherst could have 4000 additional homes. Less commercial land is available; commercial development would take place in the village centers. He added that the Town wants to preserve land in the Lawrence Swamp area. He estimated that preserving land in Amherst would continue for another 25 years or so.

Brunelle Project

The Brunelle family owns about 26 acres of land on Potwine Lane just north of the Plum Brook Recreation Area and east of the Muddy Brook. This project would preserve land in two phases. The first year 16 acres (outlined in yellow on the map) of woodland, wetlands, and part of the hay field would be purchased. Phase Two would include all of the land behind the house for a

two-year total of 26 acres. The Kestrel Trust wrote the grant application and will oversee the land purchase process, while funding will come from CPA funds (\$81,500) and the Partnership Grant (\$81,500) for a total of \$163,000 for Phase 1. Phase 2 would cost similar amounts next year. Paris said the Conservation Commission has been in favor of this project. A full appraisal has been done and Dave feels this land could be developed if the Town does not purchase it.

To fund all three projects would take about \$390,000 in CPA funds, while we actually only have \$276,794.26. Peter would like to see 1) the actual current votes from the ConCom and the Historical Commission; 2) verification that none of our approvals could be deferred; and 3) each of the projects described briefly in terms of our 8 criteria. Lynda would like to have these 3 proposals prioritized. Peter asked Dave to give this some thought. Peter also asked Sonia for clarification on bonded projects. He asked everyone to bring calendars to the next meeting. Mike will record minutes for the Sept. 27 meeting.

Several members participated in the recent CPA Coalition Webinar and found it quite helpful.

MINUTES

Motion by Marilyn, 2nd by Paris, to approve the minutes of March 15, 2012, as amended.

VOTED 4-0-2 (Lynda and Mike abstained because they did not attend that meeting.)

NEXT MEETINGS

Our next meeting will be Thursday, **September 27, at 7:00 pm**, location to be announced. Our meetings are usually scheduled for the 3rd Thursday of the month from September through April 2011 in the Town Room of Town Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was to adjourn was unanimously accepted at 8:45 pm.

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

Agenda 9/6/2012, 1 page

Minutes of 3/15/2012, 2 pages

Financial Status for CPAC Funds, 8/28/2012, 1 page

North Common Project Proposal and 3 maps, 8/31/12, 6 pages

Ricci Project Proposal and map, 8/31/12, 5 pages

Brunelle Project Proposal and map, 8/31/12, 3 pages

Call for CPA Proposals Letter from 2011, 4 pages

Respectfully submitted by Mary Streeter

Approved September 27, 2012